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## EDITORIALS

## The Polluted Embassy

The way to identify the American Ambassador at a diplomatic reception in Moscow is apparently not by the color of his jib but by the redness of his eyes. And if our government adopts the suggestion of *The New York Times* (editorial, February 28), for a "retaliatory microwave bombardment," the same test will soon do for the Russian Ambassador in Washington.

The absurdities of the "intelligence" business on both sides of the half-lifted old iron curtain has reached a point where such an observation is more reality than fiction. We read that the Kremlin has recently so increased the "normal" dosage of microwave irradiation of the U.S. Embassy, situated 1½ miles from the Kremlin's walls, that our Ambassador, Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., has been suffering from nausea and bleeding eyes that some doctors say could lead to cataracts. Our State Department found grounds for paying the husband of a former secretary in the Moscow Embassy to settle a suit he brought charging that the cancer she died from in 1968 was caused by that intrusive Red radiation.

Meanwhile, Soviet diplomats are saying on the Washington cocktail circuit that the Russians mean no harm in these microwave exercises: they are simply trying to make it harder for the antennas on our Tchaikovsky erect installation to eavesdrop on Kremlin bigwigs. The "leak" that all this was going on seems to have come from State Department physicians who felt their prime professional duty was to the health of our diplomats abroad rather than to the spy masters.

There is a serious side to all this hugger-mugger that goes far beyond the gamesmanship between the spy systems of the United States and the Soviet Union. The intelligence services of big powers always develop a momentum and rationale of their own which often have nothing to do with the national security they are supposed to be guarding. The American "intelligence community" costs about \$10 billion a year (a figure that was the total federal budget as recently as 1940). Congress has been trying, since Watergate, to put a hand on this huge apparatus, and the Executive which operates it has been doing its level (or tilted) best to keep the lid on its "secrets."

What are these secrets worth and for whose benefit are they obtained and closely held? The answer that has trickled out from the laborious attempts by Congress to peer behind the veils is that many of them are not worth the reams of paper they are written on (viz., the failure to know what was going on in the Middle East in 1973 before the latest war broke out, not to mention the series of disastrous bad guesses and cooked data in Vietnam). As to who benefits from the mountains of information, the evidence is strong that much of it is used simply to buttress policy decisions the executive branch has made more or less in the dark.

The truth about the existing American intelligence system is that its secrets are kept more from us, the people and their elected Representatives in Congress, than from any imaginable enemy. No republic not based on the knowledge and consent of its people will long survive that state of affairs.

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